

CHARLES E. SYDNOR III, ESQ.
Legislative District 44
Baltimore County



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 216
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3612 · 301-858-3612
800-492-7122 Ext. 3612
Charles.Sydnor@senate.state.md.us

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony Regarding SB 880
Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force
Before the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
On March 15, 2023

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The water and wastewater systems that serve both Baltimore City and Baltimore County are owned and operated by Baltimore City under State law and regional agreements last updated in 1972.¹ As the region's population has grown and changed, and the operational and fiscal requirements of the utilities have become more complex, the leaders of Baltimore City and Baltimore County have agreed that it is time to evaluate the governance framework under which these critical systems are managed. Senate Bill 880 establishes the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force to study the current framework of water and wastewater governance in this region, and to recommend how to correct issues that may be at play.

Given the age of the regional agreements, officials in both jurisdictions led an effort to conduct a study to determine whether changes are needed to modernize system management to improve customer service. Baltimore County and Baltimore City officials released a comprehensive study of the existing governance structure, operations, processes and procedures for shared water and wastewater systems in July 2021 called *Water/Sewer Services Comprehensive Business Process Review - Baltimore County and Baltimore City*. The report identified several challenges, including issues with customer billing, limited regional coordination, and systematic limitations for long-term planning and improvements to water systems.²

¹ NewGen Strategies & Solutions. [Water/Sewer Services Comprehensive Business Process Review Baltimore County and Baltimore City](https://www.newgenstrategies.com/net/2021/07/12/water-sewer-services-comprehensive-business-process-review-baltimore-county-and-baltimore-city). www/newgenstrategies/net July 12, 2021.

² *Id.*

Senate Bill 880 establishes a Task Force, using the 2021 study as its basis, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the current governance, planning, data management, and operations of the water and wastewater utilities, to identify opportunities to improve interjurisdictional collaboration, and to understand the current state of the structures and processes for the delivery of water and wastewater services, including operations, planning, and billing. Senate Bill 880 also empowers the Task Force to evaluate governance and operation models to determine the best fit for the Baltimore Region.³

Senate Bill 880 is an emergency bill. Its findings and recommendations are to be reported to the designated entities no later than January 30, 2024.

I ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 880.

³ *jointly commissioned by Baltimore City and Baltimore County and finalized in July 2021.